

Inquiry into Northern Australia Workforce Development

Bouliia Shire Council 7/11/2022

LOCATION.....Capital of the Channel Country.... Bouliia

The small remote town of Bouliia (pop 458) sits on the pathway of 'Australia's Longest Shortcut' – the Outback Way 200km east from the Queensland border and is bisected by the northern beef road - Kennedy Development Rd to Mt Isa (300km to the north).

- a. trends in Northern Australia that influence economic development and industry investment including population growth, economic and business growth, workforce development, infrastructure development, and Indigenous economic participation;***

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.....

We are primed to support local industry with plentiful resources and a newly developed industrial estate. Reliable and sustainable supplies for water, electricity and potentially solar (only 46 days per year of cloudy weather) will provide opportunities for potential investors with links to the Northern ports and into the Northern Territory.

- **Issues:** limited investment or funding to proceed with future development
- **Solution:** Financial incentives to invest remotely over the long term-interest free finance (5 years etc) , waiver of infrastructure charges

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT / INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION;

- The opportunities for future development of our local workforces and then potential economic participation relies on the ongoing delivery of **education**.

Evidence -Ngamba Aboriginal Corporation in Brewarrina – developed their own housing construction workforce.(pre 2013)

- We acknowledge that a high school is possibly out of our reach but access and support for 'home schooling' room in the grounds of the education facility with a tutor may be possible if the education department thought outside of the box for remote communities.
- A 'technical' college (TAFE) facility for remote western Queensland teaching skills suitable for our area. Station work, welding, cattle management etc.

b. *impediments to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support industry and business to expand and create regional jobs;*

Bouliia Shire Council identified several years ago the restrictive impediment of the lack of internet communication for business in remote Queensland. Council has succeeded in securing funding to provide internet to the premises for the township which will provide business with the opportunity to compete. (Implementation / Completion 2024)

Issue:

- Availability of housing and business premises is still a major limiting contributing factor to growing our region.

Solution:

- Interest free finance (5yrs) for councils to build infrastructure?

c. *challenges to attracting and retaining a skilled workforce across Northern Australia; and*

Bouliia being extremely remote competes against employment opportunities available from the mining industry and locations which have access to services such as Doctor / chemist/ high school education facilities.

Issue:

- Inability to compete in the employment market. (wages and conditions)
- Standard and availability of housing

Solution:

- Attractions for short to medium term employees via taxation incentives in addition to those available for 'zones'

d. *empowering and upskilling the local Indigenous population.*

Bouliia Shire is already committed to supporting the indigenous community with 73% of our outside workforce identifying as Indigenous.

Issue:

- Difficulty in numeracy and literacy for staff to progress within the workforce so always limited to 'labouring' or plant operation.

Solution:

- *Many indigenous people are not comfortable being away from family.* Onsite adult learning facility which could also cover internet training for other members of the community